

“MOVEMENTS THAT SING ARE THE MOVEMENTS THAT GET WHERE THEY NEED TO GO”
– BILL MCKIBBEN, P8

“PEOPLE CAN EMBED THEIR BRAIN WITH A PROGRAM THAT WILL HELP THEM RESIST THE ALGORITHMS”
– DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF, S2/3

“AS THE RISE OF THE FEMININE IS UPON US, THE WISE KNOW THAT THIS NEW ERA WILL BRING MUCH NEEDED TRANSFORMATION”
PENNY SLINGER, S2/4

GOOD TROUBLE

SPIRAL TRIBE:
IN THE AREA S2/16

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“IT IS ESSENTIAL TO ENJOY LIFE, CELEBRATE EACH OTHER, TO LOVE AND FUCK AND PLAY. THESE ARE BASIC HUMAN NEEDS. IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT WHAT WE FIGHT AGAINST DOES NOT OVERSHADOW WHAT WE ARE FIGHTING FOR...”

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THE CULTURE OF RESISTANCE

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GT 2016

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EVERYWHERE WE LOOKED WAS BURNING
EVEN IN KREUZBERG, I CAN SMELL THE BURNING REMNANTS OF BRITAIN
TO HAVE A VOICE, YOU MUST TRESPASS

“ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE THINGS ART CAN DO IS OFFER A CONCRETE EXPERIENCE OF CLIMATE CHANGE”
(OLAFUR ELIASSON, P4)

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MELTDOWN

DISAPPEARING GLACIERS, ART AND ACTION WITH
OLAFUR ELIASSON, EXTINCTION REBELLION,
BILL MCKIBBEN AND THE NEW WAVE OF
YOUTH CLIMATE ACTIVISTS

“A letter to the future – Ok is the first Icelandic glacier to lose its status as a glacier. In the next 200 years, all our glaciers are expected to follow the same path. This monument is to acknowledge that we know what is happening and what needs to be done. Only you know if we did it. August 2019. 415 ppm CO2” – writer and poet Andri Snær Magnason, on a plaque installed at the site of the melted glacier Ok (Okjökull) in Iceland. Photograph by Olafur Eliasson (2019), previously unpublished

"In the dark times. Will there also be singing? Yes, there will also be singing. About the dark times." – Bertolt Brecht

It's the start of 2020 and our house is on fire. Australia is burning while the Arctic is melting. Ocean temperatures are rising, and so is the extinction rate. A few months ago, I gained access to the United Nations in New York for the 2019 Climate Change Summit. I was lurking at the back of the 'media tent', where I had just accidentally stolen a chocolate croissant, and was guiltily eating it while observing all the very important-looking journalists with actual jobs to do – mostly typing and staring at video feeds of world leaders from inside the Assembly Hall. At that point, the face of a teenage girl in a pink dress filled the screens – Greta Thunberg, Swedish climate activist and instigator of the school strike movement. "You are not mature enough to tell it how it is," she spat with contempt at the rows of presumably stunned prime ministers, presidents and chancellors. "We will not let you get away with it. Change is coming, whether you like it or not."

Since the last issue of Good Trouble 18 months ago, we have been awarded Magazine of the Year at the annual Stack Awards, added to the shelves of both the New York Public Library and the Muhammad Bin Qassim Library in Sujawal, Pakistan, and been described as a 'really powerful cultural weapon' by veteran political artist Peter Kennard. (We were also decried as 'unserious... and therefore toothless' in one review, but – hey – you can't win 'em all.) Far more significantly, world peace has stubbornly failed to break out; Good Trouble came into existence at the tail-end of 2016, following the twin disasters of the Brexit referendum and the election of Donald Trump, and here we are three years later, at this desperate turn of the decade, still faced with both, and much more besides.

In these last few years, we have all borne witness to the ongoing erosion of American democracy into a global extortion racket overseen by a reality television star; the ongoing collapse of British democracy into a destructive, mind-numbing obsession with an international agreement few people previously cared all that much about; wildfires burning across the Amazon, Congo and Australia; record heatwaves gripping parts of Europe; air pollution crises in India; human rights atrocities against Uighur Muslims in China, and a desperate, resilient pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong; the inexorable disappearance of ancient glaciers; and a level of CO2 in the atmosphere that just keeps rising, rising, rising, as the fossil-fuel industry continues to burn every molecule of oil, coal and gas it can get its fingers on.

We've also seen the rise of a new global youth movement who are angry, motivated and serious about forcing governments to finally take meaningful action on the climate. And we've seen a shift in tactics toward mass civil disobedience, with Extinction Rebellion leading the charge and probably occupying a bridge or road near you soon, if they haven't already. It's been a tempestuous period, and it doesn't look like slowing any time soon. In this issue, we've taken a special focus on the climate crisis, while meeting a few of the people who are using art, culture and creativity to help bring about change. Will there be singing? Yes, there will be singing. About the dark times.

– Roderick Stanley

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"When you see something that is not right, not fair, not just, you have a moral obligation, a mission and a mandate, to stand up, to speak up and speak out, and get in the way, get in trouble, good trouble, necessary trouble." – Rep. John Lewis, Nashville, 2016

"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, Nothing is going to get better. It's not." – Dr Seuss, The Lorax

'LET'S FIGHT TOGETHER':

FORGE OF NATURE



EMEL MATHLOUTHI

Tunisian singer and musician Emel Mathlouthi appeared in Good Trouble Issue 23. Here she writes about harnessing the musical power of nature as a force of resistance

Earth, water, air and fire are the forces that fuse art to life. As an artist, I have the magical power to go deep inside myself to find spirituality and meaning when I feel lost in the superficiality of our lives. At the same time, we can also be overwhelmed by the atrocities we see in the news all over the world, and our smallness opposed to the big machine deciding our fate: capitalism. A few years ago, nature became an important part of my creative process. I have always found refuge in the grandness of the ocean or the mountains. When I stand before them, I feel spiritual and vulnerable, as a human in front of its original habitat, its mother. And I wonder how humans can come so close to wrong when we have such wonders so close to us. After venturing inside the urban jungle and exploring politics, freedom, revolution and identity in my previous work, I had a clear vision for my new album. I wanted nature to be my main source of music – to craft instrumental sounds from it entirely. As at the beginning of sound and music itself, I wanted to wield an army of furious

and massive nature sounds. I felt the need to pay tribute to nature as the most eternal source of inspiration. The world needs rescuing right now. And we need to rescue our senses, because they have been hurt. Our senses awaken us through poetry and art. They connect us to each other and help us make sense of our purpose. So I set out to create music that would feel like a dawn, where the first rays of light are the moment to revive our power. As a mother and artist, I have the dual responsibility to envision some kind of utopia for my child, yet also to speak about the menacing apocalypse on the horizon – from the actions of humans, and from nature taking vengeance on those who are destroying it. Nature is like the goddess who comes to burn everything to the ground. As an unprecedented source of fires devours the Amazon rainforest and Africa's forests, while glaciers are melting and oceans and seas are filthy with plastic and industrial waste, I decided to make a soundtrack for this real-life horror and

tragedy we're living through. Sometimes nature is a character among others, and sometimes it is many characters at once. Sometimes it's the victim, the wounded; at others, it becomes the tyrant, the angry forest, the deluge. My work is dark and mournful, but I intentionally shifted the title into the past tense: *Everywhere We Looked Was Burning*. That's what happened, but what are we going to do about it now? To me, there's always the possibility of hope, rebuilding and resurrection – like little green plants appearing after lava – but I wanted to make an alarming statement. This is not the time to do music just to enjoy. It's time to shake people up. Music and art should challenge and stimulate. People have become so numb that perhaps music can help us rescue our senses, and make us more conscious of these important issues. We're going through bad times, but we're all here. Let's fight together. See the darkness. Then make it brighter by connecting back to nature and the truth within.

IF NOT US THEN WHO?

'CHILDREN TELL THE TRUTH' – CÁNDIDO MEZÚA SALAZAR

During the NYC Youth Climate March in September, indigenous leader Cándido Mezúa Salazar told Tess Gruenberg a story passed down through generations, about the child as truthteller

Storytelling is baked into indigenous cultural heritage. Cultural codes about the interconnectedness of nature and the basic principles of benevolent life forms are passed down through generations. Indigenous leaders are the backbone of climate activism precisely because their resistance is powered by such a historical and spiritual connection to the natural world. Cándido Mezúa Salazar of the Emberá Wounaan from Panama is a co-founder of If Not Us Then Who?, a global awareness campaign highlighting indigenous leaders who protect the planet. By giving a platform to a global community of youth and tribe leaders to tell their own stories of climate activism through short films and photo-essays, the campaign is building a visual library of indigenous storytelling. The name is plucked from a seminal speech by Filipino diplomat turned activist Yeh Saia (in turn inspired by JFK, John Lewis and others), who said: "The climate crisis is madness. We can stop this madness... If not us, then who? If not now, then when?"

"Even the smallest children can teach you. Those who think they know everything know nothing. So, listen. Feel. Trust. Children tell the truth."

"Father, have you heard alligators speak?" He got very angry, and began to hit things and said, "No, animals do not speak. You are the ones who have to learn how to speak." After some time, the children invited the priest to the forest. As they walked further into the forest, something fell down from the tree and they asked him, "Father, do you know what fell down?" He said, "It may be a branch." They continued walking. A bird flew away. The children wanted to tell the priest what that was but before they could, the priest said, "Before you tell me, I am going to tell you. It was a bird."

"Those are the little alligators." Then they heard a noise and came down from the fallen tree. Out came two big eyes. A big log emerged. The priest said, "I know what this is. These are logs floating up from the lagoon." The kids said, "Father, we would like to teach you something." "No," the father replied, "you don't know anything. I can hear and I am teaching you."

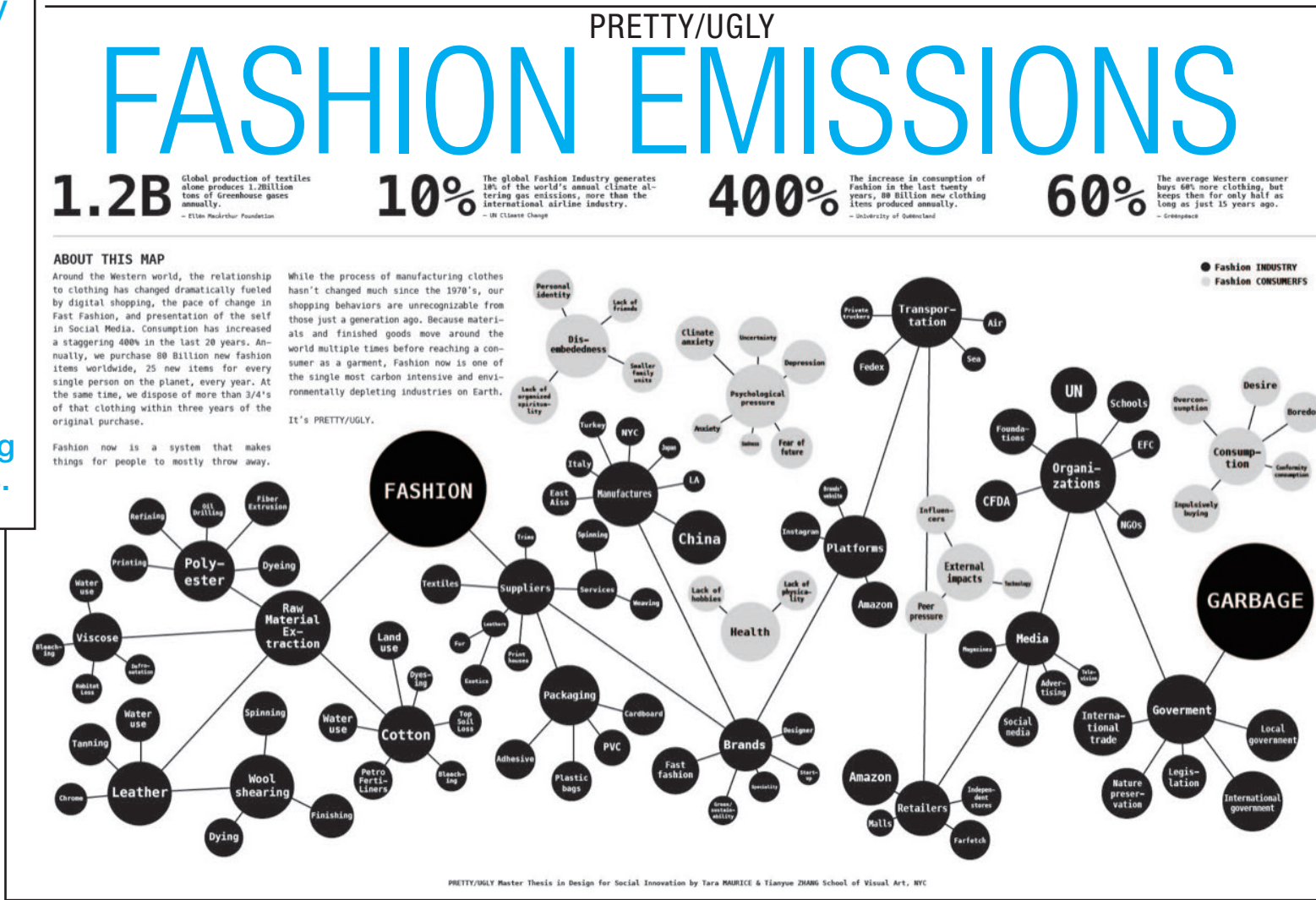
The forest became quiet. They heard dry twigs and branches break. The kids were surprised but happy. The only one who was frightened was the priest. When he realised he was surrounded by alligators, the priest asked the children, "What is this? Why?"

The children said to him, "What we wanted to tell you is that we can speak to our brothers and they can help us, but you didn't listen. We wanted to tell you that all of these alligators that come out are the ones that are hungry."

What are the defining elements of indigenous storytelling? We indigenous people have a very long history of storytelling. Growing up, the first thing we hear is our mother telling us stories. These stories are our schooling, and our school is our way of life. The first element of storytelling is to communicate the basic principle you want your kids to live by, and these principles are a spiritual link to our identity, culture and way of life. If a young person or an adult disconnects from their culture, they are dead. If they disconnect from the forest, they are dead. There is one story that connects us with young people. We call it 'The Story of the Alligators' –

They killed a lot of communities during colonisation. They killed our grandparents and our mothers. All who were left were the children, lost in the forest. Little by little, they were picked up by church people. The priest started teaching them his language, but the children continued to communicate in their own language. When the children wanted to teach the priest a lesson, the priest always said: "No, you don't know anything. I'm the one teaching you everything you know. You will only learn what I have to teach you."

Years went by and the children secretly communicated in their language. One day, the children insisted that they wanted to teach the priest something. When he asked the children what they wanted to tell him, the children answered with a question: "This teaches that even the smallest children can teach you. Those who think they know everything know nothing. So,



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AUGMENTED REALITY

PARK

The Deep Listener was a site-specific, augmented-reality installation of digital wildlife in London's Hyde Park. Artist Jakob Kudsk Steensen took Jack Mills for a stroll through his virtual paradise

It was just another day in London's Hyde Park: stoners were buying ice cream, elderly couples were falling asleep by the Serpentine, and a group of tourists were being attacked by a flock of gigantic CGI parakeets. The tourists were plugged into Danish artist Jakob Kudsk Steensen's augmented reality (AR) app *The Deep Listener*, which leads users into a capochonous imagination of digital wildlife as they wander around the park.

Commissioned by the Serpentine Gallery, *The Deep Listener* journeyed participants through a pixel-cloud of bats, past parakeets that honk with the ferocity of a Sunn O))) riff, and into the trunk of a London plane tree, the city's most prevalent tree, introduced in the 18th century to absorb carbon emissions. The aim of the project was to energise and romanticise our engagement with the biosphere, and to consider ways we can work with rather than against it in our attempts to combat climate catastrophe. Steensen took us on a tour to explain his vision, pointing out a few highlights along the way. Before AR design, you worked in video

graphics, gaming and painting. I wondered if there was always a beating heart in your work, a wider message to it beyond the splendour?

My work has always focused on ecology. It's been a lifelong interest, so I spent half my time out in different landscapes, recording audio, collecting textures, digitising and morphing them to tell new artistic perspectives. I grew up in a kindergarten by the coast, where there were no toys outside. I fell in love with immersive worlds-building and landscapes in digital spaces and just losing yourself in an environment. It gives you a similar feeling of being outside somewhere: on a trip, or in the mountains, or the jungle. The more the climate changes, I feel naturally a kind of urgency to respond to this. So your childhood politicised you, in a sense. I went to art school and was making paintings and virtual landscapes. It was what I thought I had to do to be an artist. But after I graduated, I started embedding

"It gives you a similar feeling of being outside somewhere: on a trip, or in the mountains, or the jungle. The more the climate changes, I feel naturally a kind of urgency to respond to this."

now. The other birds are a little bigger than them, but they do the call to violently scare other beings off. At the same time, they are clearly fascinating to people, and the idea was to create a sort of violent dance-off. When you first pitched this idea to the Serpentine, what did you know about Hyde Park's ecology? They had an open call for augmented architecture



"LIKE VIRTUAL AND AUGMENTED REALITY, IT'S A FIELD WHERE PEOPLE FROM MANY DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS – ARTS, SCIENCE AND JOURNALISM – CAN ALL MEET. I LIKE THIS KIND OF CROSS-BREEDING. THAT'S THE 21ST CENTURY"

(ideas), and I thought immediately about plane trees. My past work has been more focused on the destruction of ecology and with this I wanted to introduce some magic, and to explore the irrational and how you usually look at, and interpret, public spaces like this.

Moving into the final scene... This is based on a photograph I took of an ample fly. This is like the final boss in a computer game...

I applied glowing channels to it to make it seem hyper-digitised close-up, and then I split the channels apart to make it into a new kind of creature. I'm very inspired by a book called *The Strange Bird* by Jeff VanderMeer, which is about a biologically engineered bird, its encounters in the world and its experiences after it escapes.

How heavily has gaming inspired your work? As a young person I played *Fallout* a lot: these top-down asymmetric games. It blew my mind, and since then, I've been looking at various eco-fictions. Right now, I'm looking at magic – not the traditional kind, but a focus on the imagination, a more intuitive estrangement of the world.

On opening night, 2000 members of the press formed a pilgrimage through the park to test out the app. What was the reaction like? Creatures spawned on the top of people's backs and hats, it was cool. 50 phones playing back the audio and amplifying it... It all became incredibly loud. Hearing the audio come from the phones collectively and simultaneously created a really strange atmosphere. Is there a subliminal message here about climate change and our complicity in it as humans?

That's almost like a god-like way of looking at it, but I think it's an artwork. It's made by a human. I'm not trying to be too scientific and I'm not trying to state one specific fact. I want to facilitate our surroundings and the landscape and I want to bring about a sense of curiosity.

It's something I thought about with regards to AR; it's so focused on screen-time, but I thought a lot about walking, looking, listening and expanding on the usual AR experience. I want to emphasise the

local – species and the very delicate reasons why they're here. Like the reeds – they almost got lost to the city and then they were planted because they can remove algae in the water. Certain moths and insects and birds can then lay eggs in there and this is necessary for the ecosystem. There's a tendency for artists to simply 'open the gates' and let ecosystems run wild in their work, but I think that's an eco-acceleration idea. I'm on the biologists' side. We live in an era of heightened climate crisis awareness, giving way to various innovative forms of activism. How do you interpret the word 'activism' today?

Activism, that's hard. I don't see myself as an activist artist, but I have the opportunity to activate a curiosity for how local species relate to the ecosystem. I also hope this project brings a sense of awareness of the sensibility of the environment – how it all connects, why each component piece is essential and how they have evolved over 300 million years.

People tell me that they're now paying attention to species they hadn't before. I'm thinking of making a much more traditional documentary about changes in the sea, which will be focused on conventional forms of activism: helping the researchers, getting the story out, and giving them the opportunity to talk about the changes they've made. This AR project is interesting, because it breaks the conventional contemporary gallery platform down and crosses over into documentary and abstract art. I like these new forms of meaningful content, connecting to people through their phone devices. Like virtual and augmented reality, it's a field where people from many different backgrounds – from arts, science and journalism – can all meet. I like this kind of cross-breeding. That's the 21st century.

augmentedarchitecture.org

A WEEK IN THE LIFE OF A CLIMATE SCIENTIST

George Tseloudis is a climate scientist at NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies at Columbia University in New York City. Dr. Tseloudis leads a research team that observes and models simulations investigating clouds, atmospheric radiation and precipitation changes in a warming world. Clouds can contribute to either cooling or heating effects on the Earth, with variation in size, type, density and altitude making all the difference. The study of those critical differences is the heart of cloud science.

MONDAY
AM Early at office to finish up presentation for trip to DC later today. Registrations are starting to come in for the meeting I am organising in October in Mykonos, Greece.
PM Subway to Penn and train to Union Station. Already third trip to DC this year. Must be my fourth or fifth meeting in the same suburban Maryland hotel, a favourite of NASA and DOE (Dept of Energy) programme managers. Meeting German colleague for dinner; thankfully the bar two malls down serves good buffalo wings and beer – typical first-meeting night food.

TUESDAY
AM Meeting starts early with full breakfast buffet – DOE meetings always have good food. Happy to see several friends and meet some new colleagues. Meeting room is freezing cold, outside temperature starting to soar.
PM Meeting is start of a seed project to understand how rain changes with climate warming. About 20 scientists in attendance, and 5-6 DOE and NASA programme managers. Intense meeting with little chance to check other business. Dinner with most of the meeting colleagues – at the same bar, not many other choices.

WEDNESDAY
AM Early start, need to wrap up report by lunchtime. Rain forms from a collection of extremely complicated processes, from tiny drop collisions to large storm updrafts, and is very hard to resolve.
PM Draft report taking longer than we thought, and we agree to extend meeting into afternoon. Work through lunch to cover all issues of rain and climate, from floods and droughts to agriculture and Arctic ice balance. Back to crowds and hustle of NYC late evening – big contrast from calm of DC suburbia.

THURSDAY
AM Back at office. Making a to-do list for the rest of the week seems a good idea. List is disturbingly long.
PM Meeting in Mykonos generating great interest from international colleagues, but also lots of questions that require answering. Work schedule back in order – meeting with group showed good results in our attempt to derive objective classification of cloud types. Paper-writing can start.

FRIDAY
AM Very interesting morning seminar by Columbia colleague showing that our NASA/GISS record of global mean temperature over the last 150 years is even more accurate than our original calculations.
PM Beginning of paper-writing will have to wait until Monday. A paper and a NASA proposal review are due Friday – which is today. Literally speaking, it will be overdue, but safe to assume was not going to be read over weekend anyway. Late end to the day, but paper review was submitted. Hard to justify a paper rejection, but tried to be constructive in comments to authors.

SATURDAY
Temperature rising to the mid-90s as a heatwave is affecting the whole eastern part of the country. Inevitable questions by friends at brunch if it is global warming-related. Another chance to explain warming as an increase in the frequency of heatwaves.

SUNDAY
Another scorcher today – good afternoon to spend at the office finishing up the NASA proposal review. This time the review is very positive, a strong proposal on storms and climate research.

ICE AND EMERGENCY

Experience the urgency of Olafur Eliasson: superstar artist, environmental activist, radical designer. He talks to Francesca Gavin about bringing to life the horror of melting glaciers and putting the power of the sun in people's hands

Olafur Eliasson has reinvented what it means to be an artist, and his studio has transformed art into a platform to examine our relationship with the natural world. The climate crisis is at the crux of everything he does – from wildly popular installations such as *The Weather Project* at the Tate Modern in 2003 to kaleidoscopic and phenomenological sculptures, photographs and watercolours, even a portable electric light shaped like a flower.

Eliasson, who has been based in Berlin since 1995, has a studio that functions as more than a space for art production – it is an experimental think-tank researching and producing active, often beautiful objects and engagements that bring everything back to our environment. Eliasson is from Denmark with Icelandic roots, and he has talked about how going back to Iceland has been one of the most motivating forces in his work.

In the lead-up to 2019's major exhibition at the Tate Modern in London, he created *Ice Watch*, transporting large lumps of glacial ice outside of the museum, so visitors could feel them, touch them, and watch their steady and final disappearance. It evoked the terrifying death of the Icelandic glacier Okjökull, which has now vanished due to climate change; the country's government recently installed a plaque at the top of where it once stood. As Eliasson noted at the time: "Every glacier lost reflects our inaction."

In his world, art is the inspiration for solution and discussion, not part of the problem. He is now collaborating with companies such as Ikea and the Little Sun Foundation to create things that have an active influence on how the world can function and move away from the tech-fix throwaway society we now inhabit. Ultimately, what makes his work so powerful, and what has garnered him serious recognition with presentations at the Venice Biennale and museums around the world, is his balance of science and activism with beauty.

The glacial landscape of Iceland has been a huge influence on your work. How have you been affected by the changes you have witnessed and documented in this landscape?

I spent a lot of time in Iceland as a child with my father and grandparents. It always fascinated me

as an environment that was so extremely different from where I grew up in Denmark. For me, Iceland really represented nature, and Denmark was culture. Of course, I have since come to realise this was a very naïve view, considering the extent to which the Icelandic landscape has been shaped by human activity over the years, and especially since the settlers effectively deforested the island hundreds of years ago. But it occurred to me that the Icelandic landscape is underrepresented in art history. I began taking photographs there in the early 90s, and have created more than 80 series of photographs. I exhibit these as typological grids, with each focused on a particular aspect of the Icelandic landscape – volcanoes, hiking shelters, caves, waterfalls, glaciers. I am currently working on photographing the same sites that were featured in *The Glacier Series* (1999), which documented a selection of glaciers taken from the air. It's shocking to see how much the glaciers have melted in the last 20 years.

Do you think art has a role to create change in relation to our environmental future, and how do might that function?

I think one of the most effective things art can do, in addition to raising awareness, is to offer a concrete experience of the reality of climate change. Art can help people feel the reality of something that seems so large and far away. It can make it tangible. *Ice Watch* is a perfect example of how this can work. Visitors who encountered the 120 tonnes of Greenlandic glacial ice in London were able to reach out and touch the effects of climate change. The bubbles popping in the ice as it melted released air from a time period in which the atmosphere had far less carbon in it. This experience of this massive timescale, I hope, will motivate people to become involved and act together to pressure our governments and businesses to make changes on a systemic level, which is the only way we will succeed in responding to this crisis.

The last room in your recent Tate Modern show was devoted to research and development. It seemed to be creating

a platform for discussion, action and the dissemination of knowledge. Can you tell us more about this side of your practice?

I approach research first of all from the perspective of an artist, rather than a scholar or scientist. Research at my studio can make its way into a project from various angles. There are of course some very practical research topics related to making individual works of art, having to do with geometry or materials, for example. But there are also areas of research that are less easily applied to the creation of objects, and have more to do with my ongoing discussions with outside partners, thinkers, scientists and theorists who come to visit my studio.

For a number of years, I have translated much of this thinking into publications or events like *Life Is Space* – a series of day-long meetings to which I invited people who were working on a broad range of topics that interested me, and brought them together with others involved in different, perhaps unrelated, activities. More recently, my team and I have been recording some of these conversations on my soe.tv website, dedicated to the video output of the studio. Social media has also given me new ways of thinking about the discourse around an artwork. Ultimately, however, the research is all driven by what inspires the work – even where this may not be immediately visible.

It is interesting that you have been measuring the carbon footprint of the creation of your own work. Having learned this information, how has it affected how you make exhibitions, new work and installations?

Assessing the carbon footprint of a work is the first step towards gaining a new ecological awareness at the studio, and we are now in the process of developing and instituting a sustainability plan. It's an incredibly complex topic once you delve into it, and there is a lot of ignorance and confusion out there. Everything we do affects everything else in the world.

Anyone who has tried to live more ecologically has encountered this problem – is it worse to buy a milk carton or use a glass-deposit system? Maybe the glass system actually consumes more energy because of transport costs, whereas the carton is only partially recycled. There are no simple solutions. But we cannot not act, simply because the solutions are difficult. The carbon footprint is an invitation to others to engage in this discussion. Eventually, I would like to make what we have learned public, for other artists' studios to adopt and adapt for themselves.

Can you tell us about the latest developments with the Little Sun Project, and other upcoming collaborations?

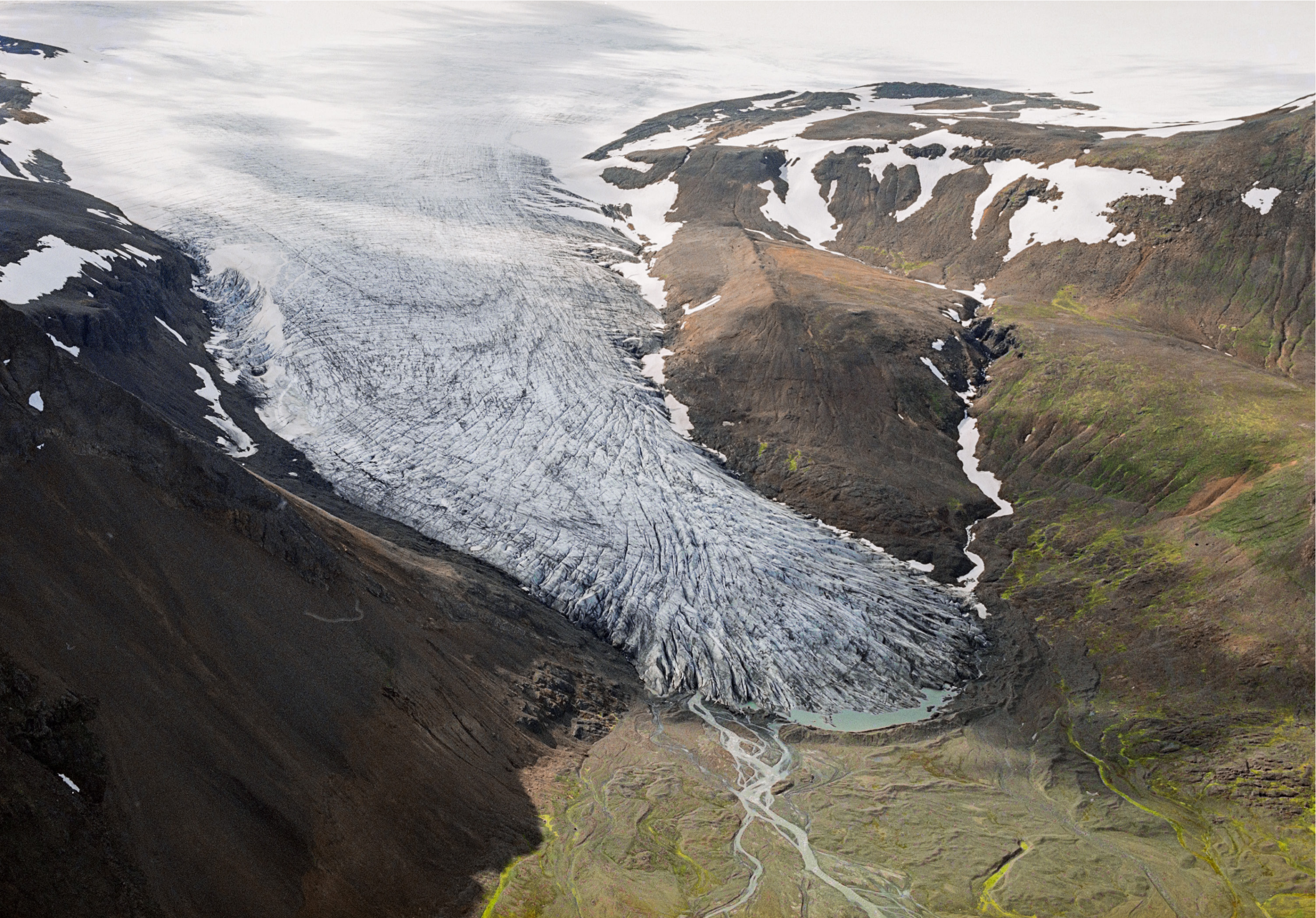
I started the Little Sun Project together with solar engineer Frederik Ottesen as a social business – we sell solar lamps that I designed at a higher price in areas of the world with electricity, so the products can be sold in off-grid areas at much lower, locally affordable prices. In 2018, we launched the Little Sun Foundation as a not-for-profit organisation, so we could use donations to bring the lamps to the most vulnerable communities around the world, to people who are off the grid and beyond the reach of usual distribution models – remote schools, refugee camps and people affected by natural disasters.

Recently, we have been working with Ikea on a new range of solar products, called Sammanlänkad, including a charging dock, a solar panel that can be hung on a window, and different structures to suspend the light from the ceiling or place it on a table.

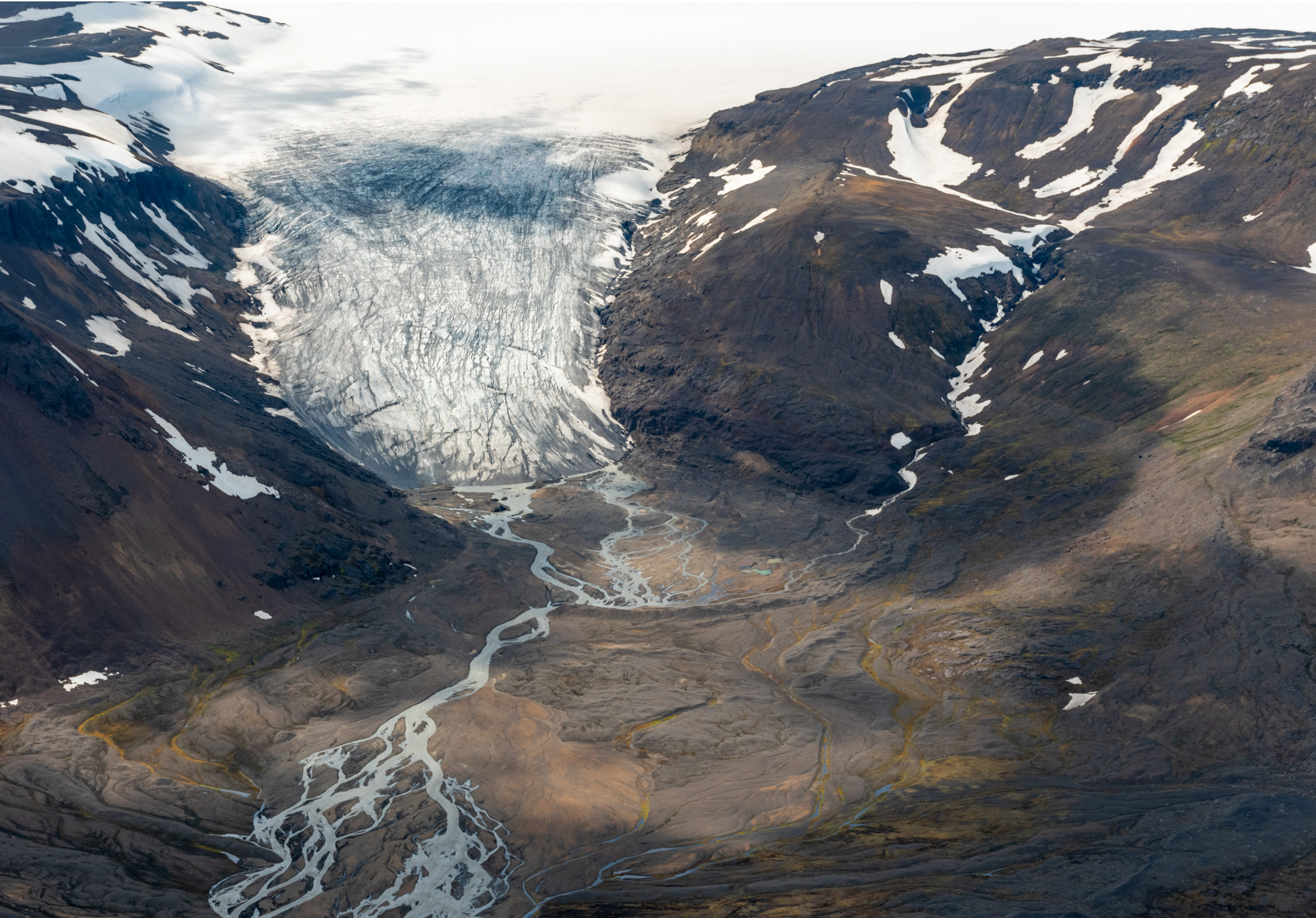
I'm incredibly excited about the potential for this collaboration to expand our reach and raise awareness for the need to improve energy access for all, and at the same time make renewable energy solutions available worldwide. For me, one of the most valuable aspects of Little Sun is its role as a symbol for energy access and sustainability – it makes solar energy tangible, putting the power of the sun in your hands.

olafureliasson.ne

“I THINK ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE THINGS ART CAN DO, IN ADDITION TO RAISING AWARENESS, IS TO OFFER A CONCRETE EXPERIENCE OF THE REALITY OF CLIMATE CHANGE”



Above: Böðufjall glacier in 1999; Below: Böðufjall in 2019. Olafur Eliasson, THE GLACIER SERIES, 1999 / 2019, work in progress © 2019 Olafur Eliasson





Coal Mine #1, North Rhine, Westphalia, Germany 2015 © Edward Burtynsky

WORLD VIEW: ENVISIONING THE ANTHROPOCENE

Over the last five years, three visual artists have been documenting the staggering reality of our current geological epoch – the Anthropocene – collaborating with a team of scientists to visualise our indelible signature on the planet. By Esther Hershkovits

The Anthropocene Project is the culmination of five years of intensive research by a collaborative scientific, curatorial and documentary team. First seen at Fondazione Mast in Bologna, Italy, it seeks to record the indelible human footprint on the Earth through the photographs of Edward Burtynsky, films by Jennifer Baichwal and augmented-reality installations by Nicholas de Pencier. The project also draws on research by the Anthropocene Working Group, which has proposed to officially name our current geological epoch the Anthropocene, meaning the period in which human activity has been the dominant influence on the environment. Phenomena such as the deforestation of old-growth forests, open-pit mining, the ubiquity of plastics and concrete and the loss of elephants and rhinoceroses in Africa provide support for the working group's hypothesis, as well as the visual focus of the exhibition. Good Trouble spoke to Burtynsky about the aims of the project and its implications for the future. How do you define the Anthropocene?

As part of the *Anthropocene* book, we wrote a glossary of terms that we had approved by the Anthropocene Working Group. One of those terms was the definition of 'anthropocene' as follows: the proposed current geological epoch, at present informal, in which humans are the primary cause of permanent planetary change. When did you first hear about the term and what was your initial reaction?

We have been aware of the word and concept for well over a decade, and it was when we were wrapping up *Watermark* (the team's previous work, from 2013) that Jennifer suggested this is what we should title our next project. I wondered if a project titled with a term people were unfamiliar with would or could be successful. It was then we decided our mission would be to evangelise the word 'Anthropocene', raise awareness for the issues it presents, and bring both the word and its implications forward in people's consciousness. How did you start working on this?

By the time we started thinking about *The Anthropocene Project*, we'd already completed two feature documentary films – *Manufactured Landscapes* (2006), for which I was the subject; and *Watermark*

(2013), which I co-directed with Jennifer. Conceptually, it really did seem like the culmination of the work we'd already done together, and also all of the work in my career so far. We recognised the challenge of the term itself, but the importance of bringing awareness to this subject matter – to our collective, global responsibility for this planet – inspired us to pursue it as the title and theme for this most recent work. What was the process of working with both artists and scientists like?

The categories under which each of the works in this project fall were taken directly from the categories used by the Anthropocene Working Group to gather evidence for their proposal. As Jennifer noted in the opening remarks of our documentary's world premiere on September 6, 2018: "We are trying with this (project) to draw attention to the scientific facts of human impact... all around the world."

The landscapes and places we photographed and filmed over the last five years have all been inspired by scientific evidence, each one an example of things like terraforming (deforestation of our old-growth forests, agriculture and open-pit mining), technofossils (the ubiquity of human-created objects like plastics and concrete) or extinction (the loss of elephants and rhinos in Africa at the hands of aggressive poaching for their ivory and tusks).

The research gets us started. We source these places that represent the biggest, most shocking examples of these events. We learn everything we can about them, not just the operations, but the communities as well. Then we try as hard as we can to physically get there, and of course once we do, we learn so much more. There are stories and moments from the people in these places all around the world that you will not find in a scientific journal or online article.

Similarly, the integration of new technologies in this project seemed like a natural progression. Baichwal and de Pencier's films have always brought a new layer and depth of understanding to my still photography. There are some things the two-dimensional image cannot communicate. But film, and this move into what I call photography 3.0 – evolving into the third dimension with virtual and augmented realities (AR and VR) – extends the possibilities of the art, both for the audiences

and us as artists.

How have your ideas about the Anthropocene changed through working on this project?

When we began working, it still felt there was ample time for a course correction. But over the course of the last five years, reading reports and stories and coming to terms with undeniable statistics in relation to our impact humans are having, we're definitely walking away with a greater sense of urgency. It is apparent the time to act is now, and we cannot leave it to the next generation to deal with. The greatest existential threat is thinking the next generation will fix the problem.

So much of the human experience is grounded in interactions with the natural world. What do you believe are the philosophical implications of this major shift in the natural world order?

The philosophical question that comes to mind is whether or not we see ourselves as part of nature, or do we see it in fact as something outside of ourselves, something that is for our consumption? If it's the latter, we end up with sort of a tragedy of the commons. If we continue with 'business as usual', we risk experiencing incredible loss of land biodiversity and ocean life, and then of course all of the consequences that would follow.

What do you hope viewers take away from this exhibit?

The initial goal was to bring the word Anthropocene into the public consciousness. I think in many ways, with the success of the two exhibitions and the release of the film in Canada, we have accomplished this. The Anthropocene has also been a hot topic for the media in the last few years, so when we go and speak to groups of people and ask how many have heard of the word, more and more people are raising their hands. We're no longer just speaking to a room entirely full of blank stares. Then of course, the artworks and the film all bring attention, visually, to the various issues. People are beginning to connect the dots, and understanding the extent of our collective

"THE PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTION THAT COMES TO MIND IS WHETHER OR NOT WE SEE OURSELVES AS PART OF NATURE, OR DO WE SEE IT IN FACT AS SOMETHING OUTSIDE OF OURSELVES, SOMETHING THAT IS FOR OUR CONSUMPTION?"

human impact. Once you understand how you're impacting the world around you, you can begin to make more positive adjustments.

anthropocene.mast.org / All photographs © Edward Burtynsky, courtesy Flowers Gallery, London / Howard Greenberg and Bryce Wolkowitz Galleries, New York



'I KNOW THERE WILL BE AN UPRISING' – ALEXANDRIA VILLASEÑOR

To Greta's war-cry she responded. Every Friday, rain or shine, the 14-year-old climate activist Alexandria Villaseñor sits on a bench for hours in front of the United Nations HQ in New York City. Good Trouble joined her on a rainy Friday last summer to find out the best lessons learned from skipping school. Let's start by playing Rose, Thorn, Bud: the rose is the highlight of your experience as an activist, the thorn is most difficult part, and the bud is what you look forward to. Which are yours?

Week four of my climate strike, a mother came to visit me. She cried because she was worried about her one-year-old daughter's future. To me, that's a situation I have never been in before. That's the rose, because the climate movement is building a community where people all relate to each other in some way, and that connection makes us stronger. The thorn is definitely activist burnout. The bud will have to be the UN Climate Summit (September 2019), because around those weeks there will be a whole worldwide mobilisation of students and adults coming together and pushing world leaders for change. But if world leaders do not act or come to sufficient agreements, I know there will be an uprising.

What role do adults play in this movement? The climate crisis is intergenerational. Everybody is needed to fight for the Earth. One of our best allies are our adults because they can support us – yes, I mean financially too – and they can advocate for us when we work with adult organisations. They protect us: in New York City on March 15, we had an unpermitted protest with 5,000 people, and Extinction Rebellion blocked off the traffic for us. My mom has been a great example of an adult ally. She is an academic, so I tell her my plans and she helps me to go through with them. As a student I am outside of the system, and she knows the system, so she can help students work around it.

When do you decide to listen to adults and when do you decide to break the rules? Even as an ally, did your mom understand why you were skipping school?

Both of us started laugh-crying because it was one of those crazy ideas that we did not think would go anywhere. She was supportive when I told her my point of view: if I am not going to have a future, then school won't matter any more, because we will be too busy running from the next wildfire. Once she understood, she joined us. I always say that adults can join us now, or they can join us later when they are forced to!

You have been here outside the UN every Friday for several months. What do you do with your time? What have you learned from skipping school?

When I first started my climate strike, I was alone for the first couple of weeks. It was relaxing just to sit there in the rain, by myself, thinking. I started to get visitors and students around the 13th week. Since then, most of my time is spent talking to students, adults or journalists. While striking school,

I have been able to learn things that school doesn't teach you. I went to the UN and sat on panels. I went to a presidential debate. School doesn't teach you politics. I've learned climate education, which is science, and school doesn't teach you that. A climate education that led to you founding the climate change education group Earth Uprising, right? Could you talk a little bit about the goals of that?

Yes, I actually have the symbol henna-ed here on my arm. Earth Uprising is an organisation built on climate education and working on getting that education into schools, peer-to-peer. We are trying to mobilise students to take direct action and reach that 97% of the population who has never been to a protest before. Many young activists network through social media platforms. How do you see the role of social media in activism?

Social media has helped us connect with other countries, hear more stories, and mobilise more students to get our message across. It is how we publicise the location and time of our protests, and how we coordinate with other students in other countries. Earth Uprising has global youth ambassadors from over 50 countries who focus on story-telling. They talk to other students and understand how the climate crisis has affected them. We are going to be using these stories and giving these stories to the governments and the UN to create policies. What is your story?

I moved to New York City in August 2018. I was visiting family back in California in November around Thanksgiving when the Paradise fire broke out. My hometown of Davis, California, was only an hour away from Paradise, so we got a lot of smoke. It reached 350 API (air pollution index), which is in the hazardous category, and at one point it was the worst air quality in the world.

People did not realise the effect of smoke inhalation. All of the hospital beds started filling up. I have asthma and, for my safety, my parents sent me back to New York City early. It was upsetting realising that climate change is fuelling these wildfires and making them more intense, and so through that, I started to research and give my attention to COP24 (last year's UN climate change conference). I saw Greta (Thunberg) speak and she really empowered me. I saw her call to action, and I decided to strike on the last day of COP24 on December 14, which was my first ever form of activism. Why do you think that students make particularly good activists?

We make good activists because we are outside of the system. We see things differently. Adults are ingrained in the system and they only look at what is politically possible, but students see that this is our future, and it is not political. We see outside of the box.

Words by Tess Gruenberg / Photography by Ben Rayner / earthuprising.org

Dandora Landfill #3, Plastics Recycling, Nairobi, Kenya 2016 © Edward Burtynsky



Carrara Marble Quarries, Cava di Canalgrande #2, Carrara, Italy 2016 © Edward Burtynsky

‘YOU’VE GOT TO MAKE IT LOOK DECENT’ – CHARLIE WATERHOUSE

Charlie Waterhouse is creative director of This Ain't Rock'n'Roll, a south London-based design group who work on socially conscious projects such as the celebrated Brixton Pound (a local currency featuring one-time resident David Bowie on the £10 note). They also helped organise last year's free *From Hope to Hope* exhibition, formed when a group of artists removed their works from the Design Museum's protest art exhibition after discovering the gallery had hosted a private event for one of the world's biggest arms companies. More recently, they have found themselves responsible for driving the graphic identity of Extinction Rebellion, with its distinctive look and feel fluttering on a flag at a street blockade near you. Waterhouse explains why he thinks direct action is the way forward, and the role design can play.

How did you get involved with Extinction Rebellion?

One day we found ourselves volunteering for a project called Stop Killing Londoners, which was an anti-pollution campaign. And it was based on the research of this PhD student in King's (College London), a guy called Roger Hallam. Basically, Stop Killing Londoners was a practice run for Extinction Rebellion. It was about looking at how many people it takes, or doesn't take, to stop the road. And things like that.

How did you then take on the design?

One of the things we'd said to Roger from the start was: "We're happy to get involved in this, but you've got to make it look decent because when the press turn up, it's got to be recognisable." Later, he popped back up and said: "Okay, I told you there was going to be something bigger on the horizon." That meant we were there from the start. We all sat round the table naming it, doing the identity, sorting out the messaging... The look and feel and tone of voice were absolutely baked into XR from the start.

What appealed to you about their approach?

Because the statistical research had been done about nonviolent direct action – the movements that have succeeded, what were the factors? With the suffragettes, the Civil Rights movement, India, it wasn't just a waving your fist around sort of thing. We have to cause disruption. We have to face up to the authorities, in this nonviolent way, with a desire to get arrested – and not be afraid of that.

Did you draw on your previous experience of working with commercial clients?

The difference, I think, is the process was way more collaborative than what would normally happen. And that's something that's true throughout the movement. It is absolutely decentralised – it's about taking on board other people's thinking, or enabling people to do their own thing. The closest we've got to a set of guidelines – and they're very loose guidelines! – was downloaded about 1,700 times within about two weeks. Then we saw it popping up in Amsterdam, Buenos Aires, Hong Kong, with regional adjustments, adaptations of words. There's a willingness to give things away.

How did you decide to use the existing 'hourglass' logo, also open-source?

Once we knew 'extinction' was in the title, it felt like the only thing we could do to represent that was use this symbol. The artist is a Londoner. Various people knew who they were so we've been able to work with them, and continue to work with them, to make sure it's used properly, and it's absolutely not commercial. What about the colour palette?

The colours were about not wanting to be a 'green' movement. And so, while there is green, there's all these other bright colours

too. And that talks about the intersectional nature of what we're dealing with. Personally, I feel very passionately that art and design are vital conduits to start talking about the really complex conversations we have to have. You can start to see that also in the graphic manifestation, layering in illustrations, woodcuts, skulls. You have to fix so many other things related to climate justice. You have to be talking about colonialism, poverty, discrimination. You've got to be talking about economics, political systems.

I think it plays an absolutely crucial role. Mark Fisher (academic and author of *Capitalist Realism*) used this quote by a Marxist theorist called Fredric Jameson, which I think sums it up – Fisher was talking about the revolutionary potential of rave: "From time to time, like a diseased eyeball in which disturbing flashes of light are perceived or like those baroque *suburbs* in which rays of light from another world suddenly break into this one, we are reminded that *Utopia exists* and that other systems, other spaces are possible."

I think that's our role. We don't communicate it, necessarily, with coherent words. But we offer those glitches that enable people to realise the prevailing narrative isn't the only narrative. And I think that's where the real power in what we do comes from. To be able to talk in a way that most people aren't able to talk. To be able to be more fearless in the things we say.

rebellion.earth / Interview by Roderick Stanley



MESSAGE FROM



Darren Cullen created the 'advertising' in this issue of Good Trouble

The astute among you might have noticed that the ads scattered throughout this issue are not entirely legit corporate messaging. They're the work of the British satirical artist Darren Cullen, whose art takes aim at predatory capitalism, greenwashing, military recruitment, of children and the hypocrisy of tuition fees. They're also extremely funny. Trained in advertising, Cullen has been working to quit his studies. Cullen has since displayed his *Pocket Money Loans* 4 kids at 5000% APR", was included in Banksy's *Dismaland* exhibition, and has managed to upset the Royal Navy, *The Sun* and Shell. Impressive work.

What difference do you think it makes in the mind of the viewer to experience your work in the actual locations of the advertising it satirises, such as public spaces (or in this case, newspaper pages)?

I think the possibility that a satirical poster might be real, even if only for a second, can be quite powerful. It's like they're saying the quiet part loud – the mask has slipped and you're seeing capital and empire in the flesh. Like if you could jam two buttons on your TV remote at the same time and get into some mid-channel where all the workings are. When I first did my *Pocket Money Loans* installation, that was in a shop in north London, and even the people who thought it must be a joke had to come in to check. A lot of smart people fell for it, partly because it felt like it was just the natural next stage of capitalism's death spiral, but mostly because it was just there in the street, and art isn't normally in the street, or at least it isn't in the form of a shop. I had people coming in telling me I was worse than a drug dealer and should be ashamed of myself – as well as a few people wanting loans. Later, I did the same installation at Dismaland and Glastonbury and in that context, people were expecting a joke, so the impact was much different. Although on the plus side people would spend more time looking at the posters, because they weren't blinded by rage.

This issue has a focus on the climate crisis, which has also been one of your areas of focus as an artist. What role do you think art and culture have in this struggle?

I found it quite hard to find an angle on global warming until I became immersed in Shell's greenwashing. Just the sheer brass-neck hypocrisy of it felt really ripe for puncturing – the idea that oil companies can save the world from oil companies, it almost writes itself. There's also been real stories in the news

about oil rigs that run on renewable energy and the Pentagon putting seeds in bullet casings, which were frighteningly similar to things I'd done as a joke, and at this stage makes me feel like Bad Guy R&D departments are just ripping me off and should be getting royalty cheques for all these terrible ideas they're stealing.

What's the most interesting thing you've studied to go into advertising, but dropped out in horror when you learned about the techniques of the medium, calling it "an appalling way to make a living and an even worse way to sustain an economy"? What led you to this conclusion?

With any kind of ideological shift like that, it takes time. A lot of the friends I made at art school were more politically literate than my friends growing up in Leeds, and they introduced me to people like Noam Chomsky and Naomi Klein and publications like *Advertures*. And these critiques of media, capitalism, consumerism and advertising all made a lot of sense, but for a while I thought I could accept that as true while also working towards being an advertising copywriter – but the tension of that cognitive dissonance eventually broke. Can you tell us a bit about how you use the language of advertising in your work?

The language of advertising is inherently hyperbolic and full of absurdly confident lies, so it can be really fun to point that back in on itself. Like putting a mirror in front of a death ray. I find that, while I'll have an initial idea for something, it only starts to come together when I look at the original advert that I'm satirising and start to work my ideas into the raw building blocks of the ad. I also think it's true that advertising is the dominant art form of our era, so it makes sense for me to work with, and around, the assumptions and aspirations it espouses. With things like your Action Man Battlefield Casualties series, and the RAF drone playsets, you've particularly made a target of military recruitment – why did you decide to focus on this?

So, the RAF drone playset you mentioned is actually a real toy made by the British military, HM Armed Forces. And the toys are part of their long-term recruitment strategy. The drone playset is for ages 5+, and you can start your application to join the British military at 15 and 9 months, and just fully at 16. So, it's not that unusual that they would be targeting kids. Obscene, but not unusual. There's a quote from Colonel David Allfrey, the British army's former head of recruitment strategy. He said:

‘I SPENT NINE HOURS UP A WOODEN TOWER’ – NED BEAUMAN

In October 2019, I spent nine hours up a wooden tower in the middle of Trafalgar Square as part of Extinction Rebellion's Autumn Uprising. When I finally climbed down, stiff and exhausted, I felt like a hero, an inspiration, probably the bravest and most dedicated activist of modern times, until the next day, when I was informed that the three women who were up there with me did another 12 hours after I left, staying all night and all past dawn. After that, I didn't feel quite as impressive. Also, the fifth-century saint Siméon Stylites apparently spent 37 years living up a pillar, which puts us all to shame, although you do have to question whether he really accomplished much in terms of averting the climate crisis.

I hadn't woken up that morning expecting to spend the day up a wooden tower, but one of the remarkable things about Extinction Rebellion is how fast you can get sucked in. I mean that both in the medium term – 10 days after attending my first XR meeting, I was signing up to get arrested – and in the short term – 10 seconds after somebody first suggested I could go up the tower, I was looking down at Trafalgar Square. It probably helped that the person who suggested it was a woman I already knew because she ran our XR Affinity Group Formation, a magnetic personality who made me feel welcomed and understood and part of something bigger than myself, and who I would have followed to the ends of the earth because she really seemed to have all the answers – you know, not that XR is cult-like or anything.

I climbed up there when the construction of the tower was still ongoing, a process so exciting I felt like I was in a scene from *Heat*. First, the crowd parted as a couple of dozen plywood boxes were rushed into position. Then the boxes, a modular construction system called U-Build invented by London architects Studio Bark, were bolted together. For this phase, the crowd formed a protective circle, locking arms in case the police tried to interfere, but because it all happened with the speed of a Formula One pit crew assembling an Ikea television stand, the tower was up before the police even noticed. The point of the whole exercise, to be clear, was to maintain our roadblock in the middle of Trafalgar Square. The rozzers couldn't dismantle the towers without first safely removing any protesters roosting in them, and to do that they had to bring in an electric lift, all of which ate up huge quantities of time and manpower.

Initially I was worried I might have signed myself up for a truly gruelling ordeal, because I thought my wrist was going to be locked inside a steel pipe for the duration of my tenancy. It turned out, though, that even if you're a 'lock-

on', you don't actually have to be locked on the whole time; instead, you have a carabiner on a chain around your wrist, so you can wait until the police get close and then clip yourself on at the last moment. Overall, even though you don't have much room up there, it's not really any more uncomfortable than a long-haul flight.



(Um, not that I would know – forget I said that! – look, I may have melted some sea ice in my past, but I'm trying to make up for it now, OK?) Even the torrential rain wasn't that bad. Nor was peeing in a bottle with just an umbrella for privacy.

No, there were only two things I didn't like about it. The first was that, when you're up there, you become public property. Like a medieval wrongdoer piloried in the village square. Obviously the attention you're getting is a lot more benign, and I feel outrageously childish complaining that too many people offered me snacks, but in the evening, as Trafalgar Square filled up after work, I was having near-constant interactions with well-meaning passersby, and it made the whole experience twice as tiring. One guy reached up and squeezed my foot in a way that was probably supposed to be encouraging but made me want to drop something on his head.

The second thing I didn't like was that, by chance, my spot on the tower was angled like a royal box towards the site's main stage, which meant I was completely at the mercy of whoever was performing. Sometimes, this was lovely (a chamber orchestra playing Handel), sometimes it was a bit much (two straight hours of literary readings), and sometimes it was my idea of hell (a big sing-along to a skiffle band playing 'Bohemian Rhapsody'). In essence, I was trapped for most of the day at a DIY arts festival programmed by hippies, and at times, compared to that, total climate breakdown sounded like it might come as a relief. Nonetheless I still intend to stop it, no matter how many pillars, plinths, poles, tripods, turrets or towers I may have to sit on to do so.

Ned is a British novelist and journalist

SUBVERTISING

"It starts with a seven-year-old boy seeing a parachutist at an air show and thinking, 'That looks great.' From then, the army is trying to build interest by drip, drip, drip." Your Royal Navy recruitment posters ('Become a Suicide Bomber', about the mission of nuclear-armed submarines) brought you a lot of attention from the rightwing press. What's the scariest or funniest thing that's been said about you?

My favourite ever criticism wasn't in the press but was regarding that project, when a ex-Royal Navy submariner tweeted about it and said "The artist also runs a 'pocket money loans' website aimed at giving payday-style loans to children from aged three – and he preaches ethics!" I really enjoy the way the *Daily Mail* usually refer to me as an 'artist' in scare quotes whenever they write about my work. *The Sun* also ran a story trying to use my work to attack Jeremy Corbyn, which featured a quote from the Tory MP Johnny Mercer, who called me a "British-hating anarchist who knows the value of nothing". Thanks, I'll take it! Boris Johnson is in Number 10, Donald Trump is in the White House and white supremacists are running amok. Meanwhile, climate change is accelerating. It's easy to feel despair. How do you continue to find the humour necessary for your work?

We have a habit of romanticising the past, but it's hard to pick a point in history that is less horrible than today... War, hunger, exploitation are constants. The world is full of kindness, beauty, solidarity and great people; it's also full of cruelty, exploitation and bastards. I think it's about wrapping yourself in the armour of the former to go there and fight the latter. You've supported movements and organisations like Extinction Rebellion and Art the Arms Fair – how important is it to you to support such things directly? Anything I make about these issues is really just decoration for the real work that activists do on the ground. It's only through popular movements and direct action that things will get better. The fact activists are able to make use of any of my designs or posters is humbling and inspiring. The newly established independent state of Brexit Britain has commissioned you by mistake to create their new flag. What do you put on it?

'Your Ad Here'. spellingmistakecostives.com / Interview by Good Trouble

TO HAVE A VOICE YOU MUST TRESPASS!

We are the Church of Stop Shopping and we work for the Earth. There are 40 of us – singers, musicians, comedians and dancers. We live in New York and originate from a number of the world’s ethnicities and genders. We’ve got lots of blessings, celebrations and life-passage songs, songs for rallies and songs for departures. We love to excite other people who work for the Earth: people saving libraries, prisoners who hear us through walls, beleaguered scientists, survivors of Trump’s immigration aggression.

Political work needs to start with simple compassion, and that makes arrest-risking OK. All successful social movements have in common the willingness to cross the line the powerful say is private property. We say, to have a voice, you must trespass... and it helps to sing while you do it. The job of an activist is to harness anger and turn the normal landscape inside out. So, take a different approach. Go to extremes. Go ahead, do the wrong thing. Earthlujuh!

Find out more about the Church of Stop Shopping at revbilly.com

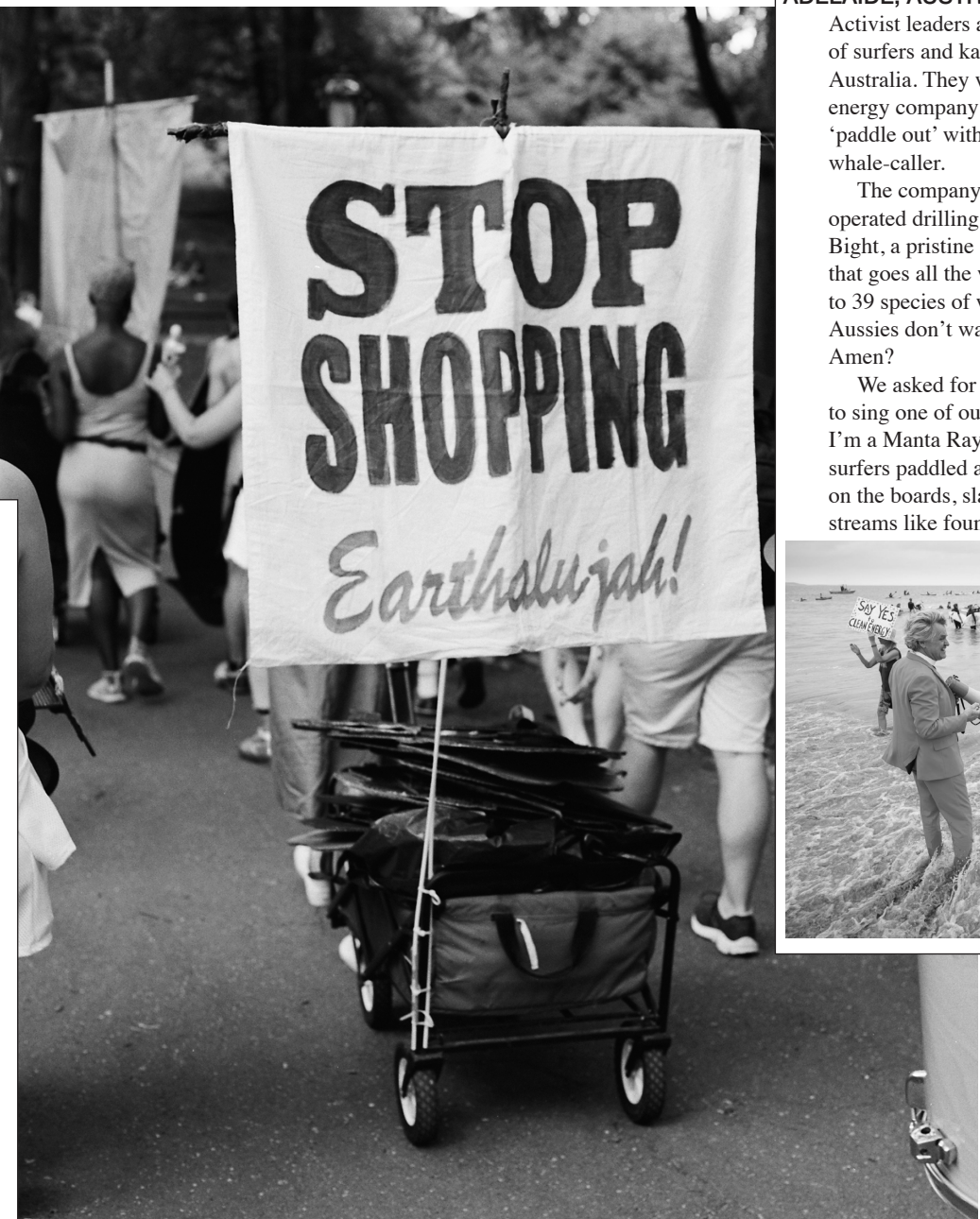
ATHENS, GREECE

20 of us New Yorkers and a similar number of fellow Athenian activists descended from the old palace at Syntagma Square into the Ermou (‘Hermes’) shopping district under our street-wide banner – “TOURISTS AGAINST TRUMP”. This was our semi-comic international social movement.

Tourism, the act of shopping for exotica in the distance, does not regard itself as political. But flying over borders while the rest of humanity is far below being stopped or killed is strikingly political. Consumerism, fraught with contradictions, celebrates a stylish violence. We hoped our music would bring the plastic-swinging families out onto Ermou Street and Monastiraki Square below the Parthenon.

As we marched by, the tourists stood in the entrances to the big retail stores with French names, slowly starting to pull out their phones. We were surprised when some of the shoppers stepped into our stream of humanity, which now had people from Syria, Libya, Sudan and Palestine – including those who had walked for weeks or braved the waves of the Mediterranean.

Some buskers with tubas, drums and trumpets gave us music, and a happy deconionising dance filled the street. The drums and harmonies in public space brought us together for a moment, so the person behind the tourist could step out and have a conscience.



Photograph by Simons Finnerty

ADELAIDE, AUSTRALIA

Activist leaders asked us to bless a flotilla of surfers and kayakers on the shore of South Australia. They were challenging the Norwegian energy company Equinor by planning a ‘paddle out’ with Bunna Lawrie, an aboriginal whale-caller.

The company’s plan was to install a drone-operated drilling platform in the Great Australian Bight, a pristine stretch of blue-sea wilderness that goes all the way to Antarctica and is home to 39 species of whales and dolphins. But the Aussies don’t want another Deepwater Horizon. Amen?

We asked for the Earth’s blessing and started to sing one of our hits, ‘I’m a Frog, I’m a Tiger, I’m a Manta Ray’, and then a thousand radical surfers paddled across the water, bellies down on the boards, slapping the water and sending up streams like fountains.



by a legion of local police. The line between who was corporate security and who was actual police was hard to discern. We stood there being processed, inhaling the stinking air. Hurricane Katrina tried to knock down the oil and chemical plants, inflicting much damage. Not to disrespect the pain and suffering of the families in New Orleans from the great storm back in 2005, but we in our Stop Shopping collective do believe that the Earth is sending messages with her extreme weather. She IS a radical activist.

HOME IN NEW YORK

The only NYC office of US Customs and Border Patrol is in the so-called Freedom Tower above the 9/11 memorial. We gathered with the immigrant-led New Sanctuary Coalition outside for a Vigil for the Disappeared. We recited the names of those who have died crossing the Cabeza Prieta wilderness in Arizona; many of the names we recited had to be ‘Unknown’.

We rallied in solidarity with No Más Muertes (No More Deaths), who have been charged with crimes for helping migrants in that intense landscape. No Más Muertes leave jugs of water along the trails, so we made cardboard jugs for our protest, waving the blue-painted cardboard in the air – “Offering Water Is Never a Crime!” Among activists everywhere is the sensation that human justice and Earth justice are one and the same thing. No one in this moment of history should have a career without direct action integrated into your daily life. Go shout the truth everywhere! The First Amendment was adopted in the 1790s but remains the evergreen law, and the way to keep it strong is to use it, test it and PROVE IT!

This winter, our activist church will offer weekly services as we move into our new home at 101 Avenue D in the East Village. We’re joining the effort to save East River Park. The park’s greenery and ball-fields are for residents of NYCHA (NYC Housing Authority) housing along the river – 100,000 New Yorkers. Mayor de Blasio will bulldoze the 80-year-old park in March 2020, he says, to build a sea wall – of course, real estate moguls want the riverfront views for their luxury housing. We will name each of the 981 trees. The families in the apartments of the Jacob Riis and Bernard Baruch houses will have a chance to express their love of their park. (Our music director Nehemiah Luckett is very good at big singalongs.) All politics is local, and in our songs and prayers and parades for the trees across the street, we will have the same work to do as in Greece, Australia and New Orleans.

NEW ORLEANS, USA

Forty-one of us journeyed to New Orleans in April to perform our church services at Southern Rep Theatre. During our short tour, we learned that much of the glyphosate toxin supply in the world was manufactured at a chemical plant a short distance up the Mississippi, among the gas and oil refineries of Cancer Alley. We drove up in a caravan, parking on the backside of Monsanto’s chemical plant. It was an unreal land of smokestacks and bubbling cauldrons of evil crap. Our director Savini discovered a gate was left open, and she led us right into the plant singing “Monsanto is the devil”.

Within 10 minutes, we were surrounded by gunmen in black security vehicles who slowly but surely delivered us back to the property line, where we were met

TOTAL FLORALISATION: MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN NATURE?

Your concept of Total Floralisation is a very interesting one that goes beyond art and into aspects of societal change. Can you explain it further?

It’s an amalgamation of thoughts, really. Like everyone else, I’m very aware of the success of the High Line in New York. That is, I’m aware of how a relic from New York’s industrial past – a disused railway that was considered an eyesore – has been ‘floralised’ and repurposed as a 1.45-mile-long elevated linear park. It’s been a huge success for the city since it opened a decade ago – it’s now a ‘must see’ for tourists. That was one of my inspirations.

But it’s also problematic. The success of the High Line has caused rent increases – the triumph of planting has caused havoc for poorer residents. They’ve been forced out.

That’s true, and that is part of the reason I came up with Total Floralisation. I think that negative could become a positive, if the planting were done in a less considered way. The problem with the High Line is that it is essentially separate from its surrounding environment – I mean, it’s elevated, for a start – but also it’s presented as spectacle, so it’s not only physically elevated, it’s culturally elevated, it’s presented almost as work of art in itself. Under Total Floralisation, everything would be covered in flora – it would not be the exclusive preserve of the rich. Total Floralisation is totally democratic, it covers everything. Everything?

Yes, buildings, pavements, large parts of subway stations, existing public parks (obviously), schools, offices, museums, retail outlets – but not roads, well, not all roads, nor rail tracks or airport runways. It has to have some element of design in order that essential infrastructures can continue to function.

So New York would become one giant garden?

Yes. But it’s not really about New York. The main inspiration for Total Floralisation was the town of Goole, where I come from, in the north of England. Goole isn’t really comparable to New York in many ways – it’s much smaller, for a start – but I did see parallels between the High Line solution in Manhattan and the current problems on Boothferry Road in Goole. Up until the 1980s, Boothferry Road was a busy street, it was heavy with traffic going to and from the docks, but it also boasted a small department store, several pubs and many locally owned greengrocers, bakers and bicycle shops.

However, in the late 80s the council decided to pedestrianise Boothferry Road. They also upped the rents, forcing out local shops and allowing in chain stores. Inevitably the street went into decline, and over the years the shops got worse and worse – chain betting shops, charity shops, boarded-up shops – and of course the rise of online shopping eventually closed the few remaining “respectable brand” chain stores. The street is now essentially dead, and there has been a lot of panic in the town as to how to bring Boothferry Road back to life. This is where my idea for Total Floralisation really originated.

What do you mean?

Well, they could just cover the whole street in flowers and make it into a garden. I think it’s essential that any proposal of this kind is ecologically sound, and ecology is central to the whole Total Floralisation concept. Not only does my scheme solve the problem of high street as eyesore, it also provides a natural habitat for honeybees. But that doesn’t really solve the financial problems, does it? I presume the death of this street also comes with significant job losses.

It doesn’t solve the job losses immediately, no. But, if successful, it would create an amazing tourist attraction. Imagine a whole street, a very ordinary street in a relatively poor town that was just abandoned, left exactly as it was – then planted with most incredible flowers, bushes and shrubs. The whole thing completely covered and transformed into a garden paradise. It’s easy to imagine how someone like Piet Oudolf (the superstar gardener responsible for the High Line) would have a field day there. It would become an enormous tourist attraction – people would visit from all over the north

“Imagine a very ordinary street in a relatively poor town that was just abandoned, then planted with the most incredible flowers, bushes and shrubs.”

of England, maybe even further, and of course these tourists would need to be fed, they’d need coffee, they’d need postcards and the like. So a whole

secondary industry would spring up around Boothferry Road. The garden would become a floral hub for the service industries around it; it would literally bring the street and the town back to life.

Then, with this ‘floral hub’ making the town a tourist attraction, presumably other businesses would start to move in?

Yes, that was my initial thought. There are still a few beautiful buildings left in Goole – disused warehouses on the docks, abandoned shipping offices, unused Victorian pubs and so forth. So, like you, I thought that would be the natural next step – utilise these buildings for new media-type industries. Then I had another idea. A better idea.

Which was?

Well, as I said earlier, the great failure of the High Line is that it’s isolated – it’s only 1.45 miles long and its ‘success’ has forced out the original tenants. It has created a yuppie vacuum.

This kind of gentrification creates resentment – it does not unify a town or city so much as create further conflict between ‘us’ and ‘them’. So my idea with Goole is to not only Floralise Boothferry Road, but to carry on, Floralise more streets – maybe even the whole town. And eventually turn the whole town into one gigantic flower garden?

Exactly. There is so much talk about ‘the problem’ of postindustrial towns – it is one that has been going on since at least the late 70s, when Britain went into industrial decline and ceased to be a world player as a manufacturer. No British government has ever solved the problem of what to do with failing dock towns like Goole, failed mining towns like Doncaster and Barnsley, and failed manufacturing towns like Bradford or Blackburn – and most spectacularly they have failed to repurpose great industrial cities like Newcastle, Liverpool and Glasgow. They have succeeded in turning some cities into shopping centres, most notably Birm-

FLOWER POWER

disused buildings, high streets and entire cities are revitalised by being subsumed beneath a wave of flowers. Here, he explains more about his proposal. All hail the rise of the garden state. Resistance is floral

ham, and others into quasi-cultural hubs, like Manchester – but government after government has failed to do this in postindustrial towns in Britain. That is what Total Floralisation is really about.

Are you, then, proposing to turn

Bridge would have only served to pump up the prices of real estate that surrounded it even further. I am talking about the total revitalisation of whole towns and cities.

Aside from the problems in Boothferry Road, was there anything else that influenced



Britain into a garden state?

Not just Britain. I don’t see any reason why this scheme wouldn’t work in other countries. Look at the US, for example. The Rust Belt. Detroit is absolutely ripe for Total Floralisation. That is one city where I think this scheme could really work.

There is resistance, isn’t there? I’m thinking particularly of a failed scheme in London a few years ago by Joanna Lumley, Boris Johnson and Thomas Heatherwick – the Garden Bridge across the Thames...

Yes, but that was stupid. First of all, it fell into the same trap as the High Line: the proposed bridge was only something like 300 metres long, so it would inevitably be something to visit rather than partake in – it was not transformative at all: not ‘total’ in any respect whatsoever. Secondly, it was to be built in central London, in one of the most expensive few square miles of real estate on Earth – it served no purpose. I mean, how many tourist attractions does London need? The Garden

your thinking?

One of my other inspirations was Il Monumento Continuo, a scheme proposed by the radical Italian architectural group Superstudio. They proposed to cover the entire surface of the Earth in concrete. It was, as I understand it, their protest against the misuse of modernist architecture – you know, how modernist utility and simplicity had been bastardised and just turned into a cheap solution for town planners, an easy way to make shoddy housing. But their work was essentially as satire. Total Floralisation, if first applied to small towns like Goole as a sort of test run, has very real possibilities: tourism and catering and huge industries. Piet Oudolf has created some of the world’s most beautiful and most visited contemporary gardens – it is only a case of bringing these elements together.

Scott King, *Total Floralisation* (Boothferry Road) (2019).

Courtesy of the artist. Interview by Good Trouble